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THE FIELD

"The world is my country, to do good is my Religion"

Bible Reading

In affirming the constitutionality of the Tennessee law requiring daily Bible reading in the public schools, the Tennessee State Supreme Court cleared the way for a U. S. Supreme Court resolution of this long-standing dispute in many states.

The state court held that such reading was no violation of either state or federal constitutions as long as no interpretation of the reading was given or other sectarian religious services were conducted.

The American Civil Liberties Union, in an amicus brief filed by Kenneth W. Greenawalt, maintained that various conflicting state decisions were rendered prior to the U. S. Supreme Court's determination that the First Amendment prohibitions applied to the states and their agencies.

It emphasized that the barrier between church and state was not only an absolute constitutional guaranty but was warranted and required to prevent endless strife and the further development of divisive influences among the various religious sects. Bible reading is not only discriminatory against the infidel who is entitled to the same constitutional guaranties, but, because of the varying versions of the Bible, is discriminatory against all of the major religious faiths which do not happen to be predominant in a particular area.

Hope for U. S. Supreme Court review of this vexing question was strengthened by the fact that the complainant, Philip M. Carden, is not only a taxpayer of Nashville but has two children in the public schools there. The Supreme Court had denied jurisdiction on the same issue in the Doremus case because none of the complainants still had children in the public school by the time it reached the federal appeal level.

—*ACLU Bulletin*